

For: 15th

Dr. Stanhope's
S E R M O N

PREACH'D before the

QUEEN at St. James's

November 4th 1711

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Dr. Staunhop's

SERMON



PREACED BELONG

QUEEN at St. James's

November 4. 1702.

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SERMON

Preach'd before the
QUEEN.

IN THE
Royal Chapel at St. James's,
November 4. 1705.

Being the XXXth Sunday after Trinity.

By GEORGE STANHOPE, D. D. Dean
of Canterbury, and Chaplain in Ordinary
to Her MAJESTY.

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B. Took at the Temple-Gate in Fleetstreet; and S. Manship
at the Ship in Cornhill, 1706.

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A
SERMON
PREACHED before the
QUEEN

IN THE
Royal Chapel at St. James's
November 27.
Being the XXII. Sunday after Trinity.



By GEORGE STANHOPE, D.D. Dean
of Canterbury, and Chaplain in Ordinary
to Her Majesty.

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at the Ship in Cornhill, 1766.

SERMON

Preach'd before the
QUEEN.

The First thing I observe is the Great
Propriety of that Comparison, which repre-
sents our Sins under the name of Debts.
For no Man surely needs be told, that by
Close of the Gospel for the Day.

So likewise shall my heavenly Father do
also unto you, if ye from your hearts
forgive not every one his Brother
their Trespases.

THE Context and Occasion of these
Words, I shall not need to detail
you with any explanation of. The
Portion of Scripture just now read hath done
that

V. 21.

that abundantly to my hand. The Design of this Parable, whereof the Gospel for the Day consists, is sufficiently clear, both from St. Peter's Question, which gave occasion to it, and from our Lord's Application in the Text, which declares the Use he would have us make of it. Upon That therefore I shall principally insist; But would, before I come to fix there, briefly recommend some few Observations, which our Lord's manner and expressions in the Circumstantial parts of the Parable seem very naturally to suggest to us.

13. 1. The *First* thing I observe is the Great Propriety of that Comparison, which represents our Sins under the notion of Debts. For no Man surely needs be told, that by the King here is meant Almighty God; By reckoning with his Servants, the bringing Men to account for their Actions and Behaviour in his Service: By the *ten thousand Talents* due to that King, the grievous, the numberless Offences against God, with which every Servant of His stands charged; And, by the *hundred Pence* owing from one Servant to another, the Injuries, and Affronts, and every sort of Provocation, that pass between Man and Man. Consequently, the Barbarity of the

the ungrateful Servant will answer to Our bearing Malice and taking Revenge, when such Provocations are given : And that Servants being at last delivered to the Tormentors imports the heavy Condemnation, which spiteful and merciless Men incur when their own measure comes to be meted back to them, in the great Day of Account; And They, who would not forgive by God's example, shall perish by their Own. Such is the plain Analogy of the Parable; All turning upon this ground, that every Man is obliged to satisfy the Law, that, where that Law hath been transgressed, it acquires a right of demanding, and a power of inflicting, such penalties, as the Wisdom of the Enactor hath prescribed, in such Cases. And therefore, as punishing the Sinner is exacting the Debt; so remitting the Debt is a Release, and quitting all Claim to Revenge, and affording to the Person faulty, all Instances of Humanity, and Peace, and Christian Charity; as if such Debt had never been contracted, that is, as if such Fault had never been committed at all.

2. We shall do well in the Next place to take this otherwise wicked Servant as our

Pattern,

Pattern, in the earnestness of that submissive application for Mercy, and Forbearance, V. 26. Thus, when our Consciences smite us for our guilt (the reproaches whereof may reasonably be allowed for our Lord's beginning to reckon with us, V. 24.) the proper Course to quiet our Fears is a due acknowledgment how just these Fears are. ^{V. 25} In this sense we should betake our selves to God, and, with all possible humility and reverence, own the greatness of the Debt; deprecate the heavy displeasure we have deserved; and sincerely promise our utmost care to make amends hereafter, for that improvident and undutiful Course of Life, which hath already brought us so deeply in arrear. Thus far the Servant acted as became him, that he did not dispute any Article in the account, nor presume to justify himself, in bar to the Severity of that Sentence pronounced against him. But he cast all at his Lord's feet, and reposed his hope entirely in his Goodness and Compassion. ^{V. 27} The Greatness of which is a Third, and surely a most comfortable Consideration; presented to our Thoughts by this Parable, in a very extraordinary manner. For, Other

Scriptures

Scriptures content themselves with such Descriptions of the Divine Mercy, as that he will abate of the Punishments we have incurred, by not *dealing with us after our Sins*, Psal. 103. nor *rewarding us according to our Wickedness*. By helping the Miserable, forbearing the Sinner, and forgiving the Penitent, when they cry unto him: But the Passage before us is an Instance of his granting more than was desired. Patience and Time for Payment was the whole Subject of this Debtor's Petition; But a total Release and generous Discharge was the Effect of it. So abundantly does this Lord, plenteous in Goodness, do even for his once ungracious Servants, above what *they ask or think*; More than they have the Confidence to expect, more than they have the Power to imagine it possible, they should ever obtain. But all this Goodness still proceeds upon Conditions; And presupposes a Frame of Mind sensible of, and thankful for it: Namely, A Readiness to express that Sense and Gratitude, by the like Condescension and Forgiveness, so often as Occasions call for, and so far as Difference of Circumstances admit, the Practice of them. This is the main Point, to

B

which

which the whole Parable tends, Pardoning of Injuries done to us by our Brethren; And That, enforced upon these weighty Considerations, of standing in need our selves to be forgiven, And of being sure to forfeit in our own Case from an offended God, That Mercy, which We refuse to Those, who have have offended Us. Here it is fit I should, because 'tis evident that our Lord does, principally fix; The Strength of whose Argument it shall be my Endeavour to explain; Not by discoursing upon the Duty of Forgiveness at large, but by insisting upon some Particulars, more especially remarkable in the Passage now before us. To this purpose I design to represent, The peculiar Manner,

I. *First*, Of our Lord's expressing this Duty.

II. *Secondly*, Of his describing our Danger in not discharging it. And,

III. *Thirdly*, Of his illustrating our mighty Obligation to it.

I. Of the Duty it self it is remarkable, *First*, That our Lord hath in this Place chosen to express it, by forgiving from the Heart every one his Brother their Trespases. It hath been already observed, That this

For

Forgiveness is equivalent to the quitting of a Debt, or cancelling an Obligation. And the Words now under Consideration imply, That the holding our Hands from any Act of Revenge, or a carrying it fair outwardly, will not suffice, unless our most Secret Resentments of Anger be so far quieted, as to stifle all Remembrance of the Wrongs we have sustained, which may abate of our Charity to the Doer of them. This is the Forgiveness we desire at God's Hand, That our past Provocations may be no Bar to his future Bounty and Love. And consequently this is That, we are bound to exercise towards Men; A forgetting all they have done amiss, so far, That the Good Wishes and Good Offices, fit for Our Condition and Theirs, shall not be obstructed, by recollecting such Offences to their Disadvantage.

I am well aware, how hard Flesh and Blood is to be brought to such a Temper: And what Pretences are used to make this appear an impracticable Virtue; destructive of our own safety, and evacuating all the Methods, which the Wisdom of every Society hath found it necessary to provide, for guarding it's Members against, or helping them

2. to redress from, the Injuries and Insults of malicious, wicked People. And therefore, to set the Matter in it's true Light, and effectually to deliver it, if possible, from the Ignorance of the Mistaken, and the Sophistry of the designing, Objectors against this Duty, I would propose, That the following Cautions may be seriously attended to.

1. That the Subject I am now upon, regards private Injuries, and private Revenge; But hath little or nothing to do with that Punishment and Vengeance, which Persons in publick Authority are by their Office obliged to inflict upon Offenders.

2. That Christians are not hereby forbidden, absolutely and upon all Occasions, to right themselves by Legal Process. It may indeed, and sometimes does happen, that they are bound to endeavour this, for the Chastisement of Offenders, the Terror of ill Men, and the Security of Order and Peace. For, where the Publick Interest is concerned, we are not at full Liberty to put up Injuries. 'Tis Mercy many times to depart from our own; But it were Injustice many times to give up more than our own. And accordingly He, who in this Parable commands

mands every one to forgive, is not at all inconsistent with himself, who had but just before commanded his Disciples in some circumstances to *tell the Church*, and, if that did no good, to let the Transgressor be *unto them, as a Heathen Man, and a Publican.* V. 17.

3. But thus far we certainly are bound, even with regard to such Cases; Not to contend or give Trouble for small Matters; Nor to be Vexatious and Spightful in any. To demean our selves with that Temper and Moderation, which becomes Men seeking Justice, the Common Good, and the reclaiming of Disorderly People; Not private Revenge, or the Harm and Suffering of the Party. In short, to use no unfair Means for getting our Adversaries at our Mercy, and to treat them with Humanity and Tenderness, when we have them at our Mercy.

4. It should be remembered, that Christian Charity does not exclude Christian Prudence. And therefore this Parable, which obliges us, to forgive those, who have wronged, affronted, or abused us; Does not oblige us to continue the same Dealings, or the same Familiarities, as if they had constantly approved themselves

selves faithful, and made proper Returns for our former Kindness. We must refuse them nothing, to which they have a Right, under the Character of Men or of Christians; But we are by no means tyed to lay our selves open to fresh Injuries; To let them into our Secrets or Concerns; To chuse them for our Agents or our Advisers, our most particular Confidants, or dearest Favourites and Friends.

5. Once more; This Parable supposes the Offender to be sorry for what is past, to have made Submission, and heartily to desire Forgiveness. And, though his Obstinacy will not excuse our Rancour and Uncharitableness; Yet will it justify such a prudent Coldness and Distance, as may be of use to make him sensible of his Fault. But when he sees, and sincerely repents of it, then we are to meet him half way, and receive him with open Arms: And every fresh Proof of his Remorse and Amendment must engage suitable Proofs of our entire Reconciliation.

Whatever a Christian, is allowed to alledge against forgiving Enemies and Injuries, will fall, if I mistake not, under these Limitations. And all without that Compass can be of no great weight, for dispensing with
this

this Duty ; The Neglect whereof involves us in a Danger, the very Particular manner of representing which to us is the

II. *Second* thing I proposed to consider. Now several other Scriptures cut off all Hopes of being forgiven by God, from them who refuse to forgive their Brethren : But those words *So likewise shall my Heavenly Father do also unto you*, referring us to the King's Procedure in the Parable, as the Measure and Pattern of God's dealing with Us ; This Application seems to carry the Point higher, than any other Passage relating to this Matter. For this I conceive to be a very remarkable Circumstance, that the Servant's Debt is in the Parable represented as actually remitted ; And yet, upon denying the like Grace to his Fellow-Servant, that Favour is retracted, and he *delivered over to the Tormentors*, as if that Debt had never been released. Now the Gifts of God are said to be *without Repentance* : And it is manifestly One thing not to grant a Pardon, and Another to withdraw it again, when granted. This is a Difficulty in the Application of the Parable, for reconciling which to our Notions of the Justice and Unchangeableness of Almighty

V. 27.

V. 34.

Rom. xi. 29.

God,

God, we shall do well to take the following Particulars along with us.

1. That Eternal Death and Torture being in Strictness the deserved Wages of every wilful Sin, God may justly inflict this Punishment on a Sin so heinous, as Uncharitableness. And, according to this Construction, here is no need of Retrospect; For this the unrelenting Servant suffers not for his former Crimes, but for that last of Hard-heartedness only. This, in the Language of the Parable, is a Debt; A Debt incapable of being satisfied by the Contractor, and contracted afresh since the Release of the old one. Consider,

2. That it is agreeable to all the Measures of Justice and Equity, to punish those Criminals more severely, who have abused the Mercy of the Government, extended to them formerly. And so this Servant, and all whom he resembles, may be said, indirectly, to suffer for former Facts, as some new Fact excludes them from that Mercy, which this had found, had they not continued insensible, and unreformed, by that Grace, of which they so largely tasted, when Guilty and Obnoxious heretofore. For Governours must vindicate

vindicate the honour of Law and Justice; And Patience, when perverted to ill purposes, naturally turns into Rigour. But then the Pardon is not in this case properly revoked; Rather, by producing no fruits of amendment, it becomes accidentally an occasion of Anger more fierce, and Vengeance inexorable.

3. This manner of proceeding may be an Intimation, that the Pardon of Sin, like all other Spiritual Blessings, is but imperfect, and suspended upon conditions, during our continuance in the present World. That we now have it, as Divines sometimes speak, in *Inchoation* only: But are to wait for our full and final Absolution, in the Sentence of God's great Day. Now These Beginnings, and the present Comforts of them, are such as keep us still upon our good Behaviour. They may be forfeited and lost by relapses into Vice; They proceed and are confirmed, upon a supposal of our Conversion and Perseverance; But Wickedness, not forsaken, cancels the Act of Grace, and brings all our old Guilt back upon us again. Nor is this any reflection upon the Truth and Constancy of God, in regard the Change is not in Him, but in ourselves; and so, as St. *Chrysostom* in the present Case expresses it, the King did not falsify, but

the inhumane Servant defeated his own grant of Mercy.

Some or All of these ways, especially allowing for the figurative Style of Parables, will abundantly suffice to resolve the difficulty before us. But which of them soever we take, the necessity of forgiving others is exceeding clear and strong: For every way we have an experiment in view, not only of a bar put to Mercy for the future, but of Mercy past and already received, render'd ineffectual, nay turning to the Party's greater condemnation, by refusing to discharge this Duty. All which is yet more powerfully enforced by the *Third Observation* I proposed, *viz.*

III. The Manner of illustrating our mighty Obligation to it; which is done by comparing the two Cases together, and so shewing the disparity between them. Now that Disparity consists chiefly in Three things, The Parties concerned, The Quality of the Debt, and The Ability of making Satisfaction. These are Differences, each of them deserving our most attentive Consideration.

I. For that of the Parties *First*, Our Sins against God are a Debt to a King, a Trespasse upon a Father; Those of Men against Us are between Servant and Fellow-Servant,
Brother

Brother and Brother. One known Aggravation of any Fault is estimated by the Quality of the Person offended; And the Capacities, which God is here represented under, are such, as do above all others render Sinners in this respect inexcusable. His Dignity and Distance above us, His Authority and Dominion over us, are implied in the Character of a King; His boundless Affection, and Goodness, and tender Care for us, under that of a Father. The Former convicts us of the most insolent Rebellion, The Latter of the basest and most unnatural Ingratitude. And how hardned is that Face, which betrays not the utmost confusion for disobedience toward such Relations even among Men? But what are the best of Fathers, what the mightiest of Kings upon Earth, compared to our most gracious, most glorious one in Heaven? And consequently, What comparison can there be, between Our Offences committed against God, and those by which any One Man can have provoked any Other Man? How near to a level must They needs stand, who are both taken out of the same Clay, both framed by the same Potter, both cast in the same Mould, both Servants in the same Family, though the Rank and

Post they both hold in it be not exactly alike? How small and inconsiderable is any difference, in the power of a few Circumstances to make, where all the Essential Parts and Privileges are perfectly alike? Weigh then this disproportion well, and then tell me, O Man, with what Face thou can'st go to extremities with one so much thy Equal, when thy own Conscience accuses thee daily, and flies for Pardon to One in every respect infinitely thy Superiour? But, if this Consideration cannot disarm thy Passion, the next, I perswade my self, will not fail to put it quite out of Countenance: Which is

2. Secondly, The Quality of the Debt it self: Figured by Sums so distant, as That of Our Offences against God amounting to *Ten Thousand Talents*; Those of our Brethren against Us rising no higher than *a Hundred pence*. They, who take the pains to compute these two Sums, will, I think, find the disproportion between them, to be much about Six hundred thousand to One. Nor may we imagine, the Comparison stands good, only in the case of very notorious and profligate Sinners on the one hand, and of the slightest Injuries on the other. But every Man, even the most circumspect, owes his

his *Ten thousand Talents* to God; and no Man, even the most unworthily treated, hath more than *a hundred pence* to demand of his Brother. For how poor is the damage sustained by One or a Few instances of Enmity or Injustice done to Us, if set against the various, the frequent, the continual Provocations, daily and hourly given by us to God? How small is the greatest Clemency of the meekest and best-natured Man alive, if compared to those boundless overflowings of Mercy, extended by Him to sorrowful and returning Sinners? But especially, how unworthy is any Sinner of that Mercy, who refuses to forgive a Debt so trivial, that, if himself be not forgiven Six hundred thousand times as much, he must be ruined and undone for ever: Nay, who is already forewarned, that forgiven he cannot be that vastly great, without remitting freely this very small demand? To all which we have yet a

3. *Third Difference* to add, with regard to the ability of these several Debtors: Since what We have offended God in we are in no condition to make satisfaction for; But for all that Men have done amiss to Us, we may receive large and sufficient Reparation.

This

V. 25.

This remark likewise the Parable suggests, by affirming, that *the Servant had not where-withal to pay his Lord.* His asking *patience* therefore, and promising full payment, was but the artifice of common Debtors, who, to gain time and quiet, make no scruple to engage for things they are altogether unable to make good. But now, by no such Intimation being left us of the Fellow-Servant, we may reasonably presume, that his *hundred pence* might and would have been easily compass'd, with a little forbearing, and gentle usage.

V. 28, 29, 30.

Thus it is likewise in the Application. For many Offences the very Persons offending may make us good amends; Many the Laws will right us in: And those, in which neither of these ways can help us to restitution, God hath a thousand methods in reserve, and will not fail to do us Justice for. An Estate wrested out of our hands by Oppression or Fraud, may be drawn back again with advantage; A malicious Slander may blow over, and be so effectually confuted, as even to establish and raise our Reputation: But if neither of these happen, still such are only temporal and transitory losses. Men may impoverish us here, but they cannot take from us that Treasure in Heaven,

upon

upon which alone our Hearts ought to be fixed. They may speak and think amiss of us, but, Blessed be God, it is not Theirs, but His Sentence that we are to stand and fall by; and His Judgment, we are sure, will be according to Truth and Righteousness. Nay, put the last and worst effect of Malice, that it kill our Body; yet can it not touch our Souls, nor finally destroy that very Body; nor rob us of one Jewel in that Crown, which when Outrage and Envy help to procure, they become even a kindness and advantage to us. And thus we know it is, *that all things are sure to* Rom. viii. 28. *work together for good to them that love God:* That, the more grievous such Men's Sufferings, the more injurious, the more meekly endured, the more charitably pass'd over they have been; by so much the brighter, the more massive, is that Eternal Glory they work out.

But, tho' Men may sometimes, and God can and will always make us amends, yet we are not in a Capacity of making Him any: All the payment he can receive for this vast Debt on our part, is of his own. For We have nothing, and We are nothing; and therefore, knowing that we had not to pay, this gracious Lord hath provided himself a Lamb; a Lamb of more value than Millions of Millions of us;

and whole Blood he
 satisfaction for the
 whole World of Sin
 So strongly is this
 a Comparison of the
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 thing will be so. I
 therefore with an ex
 Son of Sirach, than
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*Ecclesi. xxviii.
 1, &c.*

He that revengeth
the Lord, and he will
remembrance. Forgive
he hath done thee, So
given, when thou pr
hatred against another
from the Lord? He
which is like himself
giveness of his own
flesh nourish hatred,
don of his Sins?
ments, and bear no
Remember the Cove
wink at Ignorance.

ON Preach'd before

and he therefore accepts in full
the Debts and Trespases of the
Sinner. *ai zi bo d od b d d*
this Duty bound upon us, by
the two Cases, as well as by
insisted on before: To Men
and unprejudiced these Reasons
t: To them that are not, no.
I conclude my Discourse
an excellent passage out of the
than which I can think of none
to the Gospel for this Day,
th shall find vengeance from
e will surely keep his sins in
Forgive thy Neighbour the hurt
e, So shall thy sins also be for-
on prayest. One Man beareth
another; and doth he seek pardon
He sheweth no mercy to a man,
mself; and doth he ask for-
own sin? If he that is but
red, who will intreat for par-
? Remember the Command-
no Malice to thy Neighbour;
Covenant of the Highest, and
ce.



FINIS.